

St. Catherine University

**SOPHIA**

---

Masters of Arts in Education Action Research  
Papers

Education

---

12-2016

## Vocabulary Instruction and Student Participation and Retention

Jenny A. Kading

*St. Catherine University*, [jakading@stkate.edu](mailto:jakading@stkate.edu)

Lisa J. Zuther

*St. Catherine University*, [ljzuther@stkate.edu](mailto:ljzuther@stkate.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://sophia.stkate.edu/maed>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Kading, Jenny A. and Zuther, Lisa J.. (2016). Vocabulary Instruction and Student Participation and Retention. Retrieved from Sophia, the St. Catherine University repository website:  
<https://sophia.stkate.edu/maed/132>

This Action Research Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Education at SOPHIA. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters of Arts in Education Action Research Papers by an authorized administrator of SOPHIA. For more information, please contact [amshaw@stkate.edu](mailto:amshaw@stkate.edu).

# Vocabulary Instruction and Student Participation and Retention

An Action Research Report

By Lisa Zuther & Jenny Kading

## Vocabulary Instruction and Student Participation and Retention

Submitted on December 22, 2015

in fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree

Lisa Zuther and Jenny Kading

Saint Catherine University

St. Paul, Minnesota

Advisor\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

### Abstract

This action research investigated vocabulary retention and participation gain from integrating close reading passages into a Kindergarten and Second Grade public school classroom. The methods incorporated included turn and talk opportunities, student journals, and close reading passages. Thirty-six primary school aged students were included in the study. Sources of data collection include a teacher self-evaluation survey, vocabulary recognition task, observational checklist, and observational rubric. Students displayed an increase in vocabulary retention and participation. Because of the students' increase in retention and participation during whole group instruction, we will continue to use close reading passages in our classrooms.

*Keywords:* vocabulary, close reading, retention

Iman (2009) states “literacy performance links to oral language skills and especially vocabulary development” (p. 9). Although the strong link between early exposure to vocabulary and later success in literacy is well established, primary teachers continue struggling to provide effective vocabulary instruction. Reasons for those difficulties include: 1) lack of teacher training and knowledge (Berne et al., 2009 and Kindle, 2010), and 2) the absence of strong vocabulary instructional strategies within reading programs (Gill, 2008; Iman, 2009; Kindle, 2010; and Spencer, Goldstein, Sherman, Noe, Tabbah, Ziolkowski, & Schneider, 2012). Key findings in the literature include: the importance of intentional vocabulary instruction; effective vocabulary instructional strategies; and, the importance of pre-selecting words before a content unit.

Vocabulary growth is tied to literacy development for all students. Jalongo and Sobolak (2011) state “all students, regardless of socioeconomic status or background, need to make significant gains in receptive and expressive vocabulary at home and at school each year in order to support their growth in literacy” (p. 421). Iman (2009) discusses that not all students come to school with background knowledge which is linked to reading difficulties. Comprehension and vocabulary knowledge are often times the next step for proficient readers who have mastered phonics. Therefore, intentional vocabulary instruction is critical for novice and proficient readers in the early years of elementary school. By third grade, the word knowledge gap between students who begin school with a rich vocabulary background and students who do not, differ by thousands (Christ et al., 2010; Maynard et al., 2010; and St. John et al., 2014).

Read-alouds are commonly used to teach vocabulary in primary classrooms. The use of read-alouds result in improved vocabulary, comprehension, oral language, and background knowledge (Kindle, 2010). Teachers should select books that can be read interactively, and that

have pictures and text that give clues to word meanings (Christ & Wang, 2010). Clues to word meanings can also be conveyed through the expression, intonation, and gestures of the teacher.

Developing vocabulary requires teachers to provide multiple activities and opportunities for students to use new words. Stahl & Bravo (2010) state “word learning happens incrementally; with each additional encounter with a word, depth of understanding accrues” (p. 567). Multiple exposures to new words can be accomplished by using multiple contexts and examples (Corrigan, 2011; Kindle, 2010; Marzano, 2004; Maynard, Pullen, Coyne, 2010; McIntyre, 2007; St. John & Vance, 2014; Spencer et al., 2012), writing in and revisiting student journals (Hasty & Schrodtt, 2015 and Marzano, 2012), playing games (Berne, et al., 2009; Marzano, 2004; St. John et al., 2014; Spencer et al.2012), and student-created nonlinguistic representations such as pictures and graphic organizers (Gill, 2008; Marzano, 2004; St. John et al., 2014). Peer interactions play a critical role in vocabulary development including discussions using vocabulary in their own words, retelling parts of texts, and answering questions. Jalongo et al. (2011) state, “a key finding in the research is that young children need to be actively engaged in vocabulary development if they are to remember new words and begin to grasp the multiple, nuanced meanings of words” (p. 421).

Teaching the process of having meaningful conversations is also an important component when discussing text and vocabulary. McIntyre (2007) points out “...this kind of talk does not just happen naturally in classrooms, it must be taught” (p. 619). Teachers should model *how* discussions should look and sound by using their talk to initiate student thinking and talking.

Teachers should create word banks of key vocabulary before teaching a unit of study. Many scholars suggest strategies to select words taught to students.

Marzano's (2004) study found the following:

...estimates of the number of words students should know vary greatly, and not all words students might encounter are critical to know. It is my firm belief that if some basic distinctions could be made between words that are critical to students' academic success and those that are not, a viable and straightforward approach to direct vocabulary instruction could be devised. The issue, then, is identifying a listing of vocabulary terms critical to academic success. (p. 88)

Stahl et al. (2010) discuss that in order to inform instruction and document the development of vocabulary over time, the following two assessments should be given before and after a content unit. The Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS) identifies students' level of knowledge about each teacher-selected word and the Vocabulary Recognition Task (VRT) is used to estimate vocabulary recognition. For the VRT, teachers choose a bank of words used in a content unit and students answer yes if they know the word or no if they do not know the word. Stahl et al. (2010) state "the VRT requires teachers to select a bank of words that students are held accountable for in a content unit..." (p.572). Stahl et al. (2010) also point out "using the VRT as a pretest allows teachers to determine which words are known and unknown" (p.575).

Boote (2006) discusses distinguishing what words to teach using percentiles of student understanding. She suggests that words understood by forty percent of students or less are considered too hard and words understood by eighty percent of students or more are too easy. She suggests "the words worth teaching to the whole class then are the words that score between the upper and lower percent limits, words that score between 40 and 80 percent" (p.25). When words are pre-selected, it allows teachers to focus their instruction to provide students with the

most applicable vocabulary terms. More time can be dedicated to intense instruction to the more unfamiliar words rather than to known words (Stahl et al., 2010).

While collecting research from a variety of sources, consistent themes revealed themselves in the area of vocabulary instruction. The common themes included the importance of intentional vocabulary instruction, effective vocabulary instruction strategies, and pre-selected word lists. Several of the strategies suggested throughout the literature align with close reading passages and can be implemented in primary classrooms. Valuable data collection ideas were also found in the literature. Those include a Vocabulary Recognition Task, observation logs, and teacher reflection journals and self-evaluations. When these strategies and data collection resources are utilized, students are given the opportunity to gain background knowledge and demonstrate comprehension, which is critical in becoming proficient readers.

Throughout several discussions, the authors found that many K-5 elementary public school teachers expressed concerns for children's vocabulary knowledge. The teachers' concerns most notably surrounded the students' lack of background vocabulary knowledge. The teachers noticed that students who struggle in the area of reading usually do not enter school with a wealth of vocabulary. They also noticed that students who are proficient in phonics may have difficulties with comprehension. There is an inconsistency of vocabulary instructional methods throughout the district. There are discrepancies between teacher's opinions and understanding of the importance of vocabulary instruction. Many teachers feel that it is unclear which strategies are most effective. Within the last three years, several discussions surrounding vocabulary knowledge and instruction have taken place between colleagues and administration at the elementary level within the district. Those topics include: 1) effective strategies to implement vocabulary instruction, 2) difficulties students have while taking standardized assessments due to



their lack of test-taking vocabulary knowledge, 3) how understanding read-alouds can be difficult for students who do not have background knowledge, 4) the validity of the vocabulary instructional strategies suggested in our district-adopted reading program, and 5) how the missing piece in reading tends to be vocabulary and comprehension for even top readers. Close reading passages have been implemented and shared within the district. One school in particular used close reading passages throughout the school as an intervention during their intervention and enrichment (I/E) time. After implementing close reading passages, this school found the intervention to be well received by the students. The activities included in close reading units correlate with strategies found in the literature. In the 2015-2016 year, more teachers in the district decided to implement close reading passages for vocabulary instruction.

For the action research, close reading was defined by Dr. P. David Pearson “close reading is focused sustained reading and rereading of a text for the purpose of understanding key points, gathering evidence and building knowledge” (p.4) (Kuster, 2015). For the study, a specific close reading unit was used in two primary classrooms with students five years to eight years of age. Data was collected from forty-two students, twenty boys and twenty-two girls who participated in an all-day classroom. Each student learned two new vocabulary words each week. Each student learned eight vocabulary words, participated in twelve turn-and-talks with peers and completed eight vocabulary journal pages over the course of five weeks. Prior to the study, students learned the routine and process for turn and talks to prepare them for the upcoming close reading unit.

Due to the importance of intentional vocabulary instruction in primary classrooms and its link to later reading success, it is wise to investigate successful vocabulary instructional strategies such as close reading passages. The question guiding this research is: To what degree

can close reading in an early elementary classroom improve vocabulary lesson engagement and retention?

### **Methodology**

During the week prior to the start of the Fall Close Reading unit, the classroom teachers:

1) gained perspective on the students' familiarity and knowledge of the pre-selected unit vocabulary words, 2) took a self-evaluation survey (see Appendix A), and 3) taught students how to engage in peer discussions through the use of turn-and-talks.

In order to gather information about the students' word knowledge, each student individually completed a Vocabulary Recognition Task (VRT) (see Appendix B) with their classroom teacher. One word at a time, the teachers asked each student to say "yes" if they had heard the word before, explain its meaning if they had, and answer "no" if they had not heard the term before. The teachers recorded the student answers and explanation on the VRT. The objectives of the VRT were to find out what students already knew for instructional purposes, and to track growth of vocabulary word knowledge over time. The teachers also used the VRT to document any misunderstandings students may have had about the words. For example, one student in particular confused the word migrate with migraine. Writing a note in the VRT prompted the teacher to check in with that particular student when defining the word migrate during the implementation of the unit.

The teacher self-evaluation survey was part of a reflective process. The teachers used the information to focus on how to best use their strengths. It also showed them the areas needing improvement in order for them to carry out effective instruction throughout the study. The teacher evaluation survey was also used to track professional growth over time.

Finally, students were taught how to participate in a peer discussion through turn-and-talks prior to the unit. The purpose of the pre-instruction was so the focus during the study would be on meaningful conversations about vocabulary rather than on the logistics of turn-and-talks.

During the four weeks the Fall unit was taught, a variety of data sources were used to monitor student progress towards retention of the pre-selected vocabulary words. The data sources included student artifacts, teacher observational data, and teacher reflection journals.

One or two Fall Close Reading passage(s) were introduced to all of the students each week. Two new vocabulary words were pulled out of the text and focused on each week. In order to provide multiple exposures to the new words to the students, the teachers also integrated into books, centers, activities, such as a nature walk, games, and art into the unit.

Three days a week, all students participated in peer discussions about the new words presented in the Close Reading passages through the use of turn-and-talks. The teachers prompted the students with one question during each discussion session. Once the turn-and-talk was complete, the teachers asked each student to share what their partner had said. During that time, the teachers scored the student answers using the observational rubric (see Appendix C). The objectives of the observational rubric were to look for trends of student participation and understanding in order to adjust the instruction and to monitor student growth.

The other two days of the week, students were asked to create a nonlinguistic representation of a newly introduced word in their student vocabulary journals. Students were also encouraged to write the meaning of the word in their journals. While students worked, the teachers took observational notes and asked students to orally describe their work. Students were asked to describe journal entries and pictures in order to accurately use the Observational Checklist (see Appendix D). When the journal was handed in each time, the teachers looked

through the student work and filled out an observational checklist. As the teachers checked the student journals, they transferred their notes into the *Observation Notes* area of the checklist. If students used the vocabulary in their other work or in conversations throughout the day, those observations were noted as well. The purpose of the observational checklist and notes were to monitor student understanding and to watch for growth over time.

Once a week, the teachers wrote in a personal journal about student progress, the process of collaboration, and what changes could be made to the instruction. The teachers then came together and shared their insights from the reflective journals. From there, the teachers planned their instruction together for the following week while using their reflective information. If changes were needed, they were discussed and made during the meeting.

Following the four weeks of instruction, the teachers administered the VRT posttest, completed the self-evaluation survey, and finalized their personal reflection journals. The posttest was given in order to check vocabulary retention, monitor growth in the students' word knowledge, and look for trends in the data.

The teachers compared the information from both self-evaluation surveys to gain perspective of professional growth made throughout the study. They also looked through their personal journals and made note of successes and areas of weakness. The teachers used the information gathered to utilize the instructional strategies and approaches that were found to be the most successful in their future vocabulary instruction.

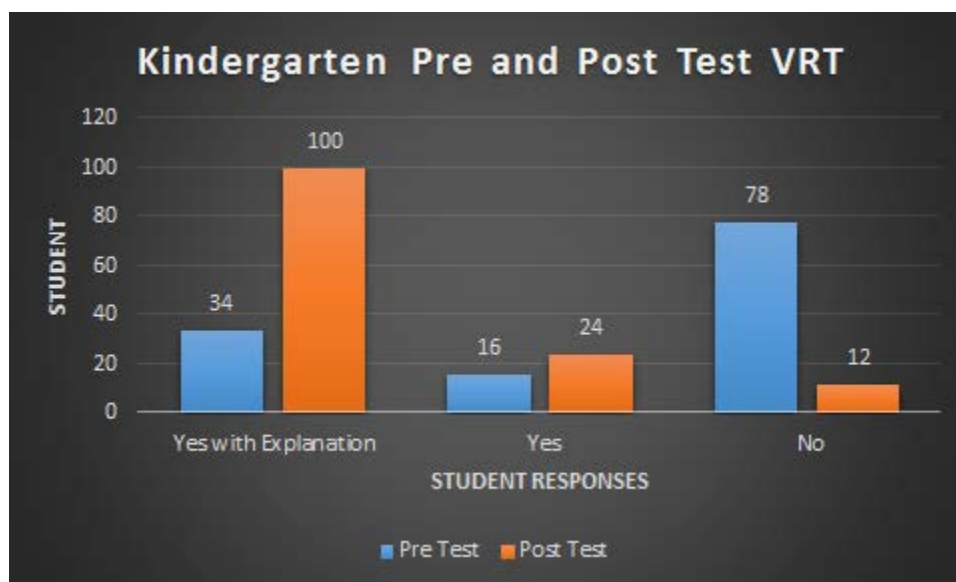
### **Analysis of Data**

At the conclusion of the six weeks, we analyzed the information we gathered using our data sources. During the analysis, we looked for student participation patterns and student growth over time. The data sources included a Vocabulary Recognition Task (VRT), student

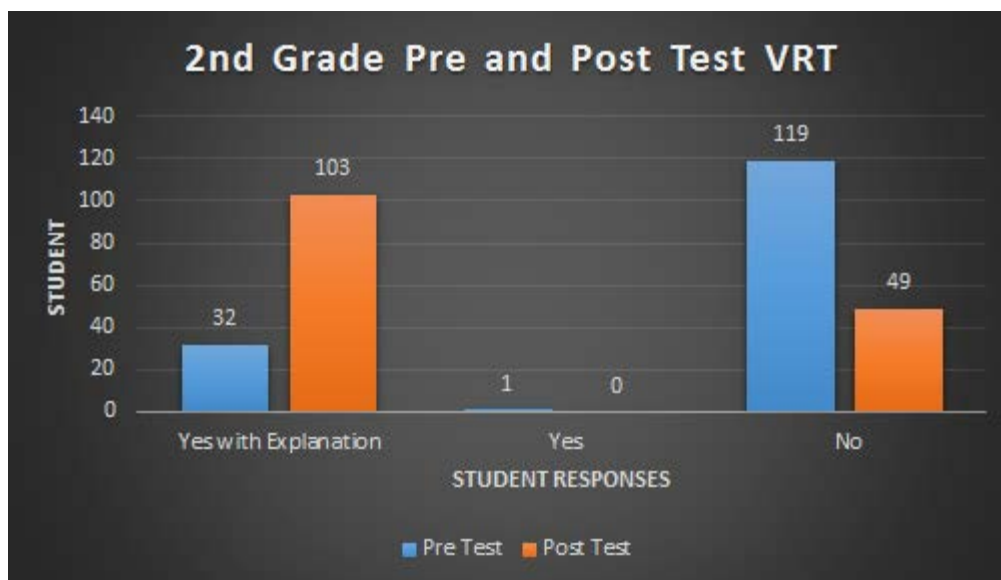
artifacts, an observational checklist, an observational rubric, teacher observations, a teacher self-evaluation survey, and teacher reflection journals.

The first data analyzed was the VRT. We used this source to obtain a baseline of student background knowledge of the vocabulary taught throughout the unit. When analyzing the data, the student responses were coded Y for yes, Y/E for yes with an explanation, and N for no. This was to show their ability to verbally share their knowledge of the vocabulary words selected for the unit.

The VRT assessment was used again after the four week period using the same coding, Y/E for yes with an explanation, Y for yes, and N for no. Figure 1 illustrates the results of the Kindergarten students' understanding on the VRT pretest and posttest. Figure 2 illustrates the results of the second grade students' understanding on the VRT pretest and posttest.

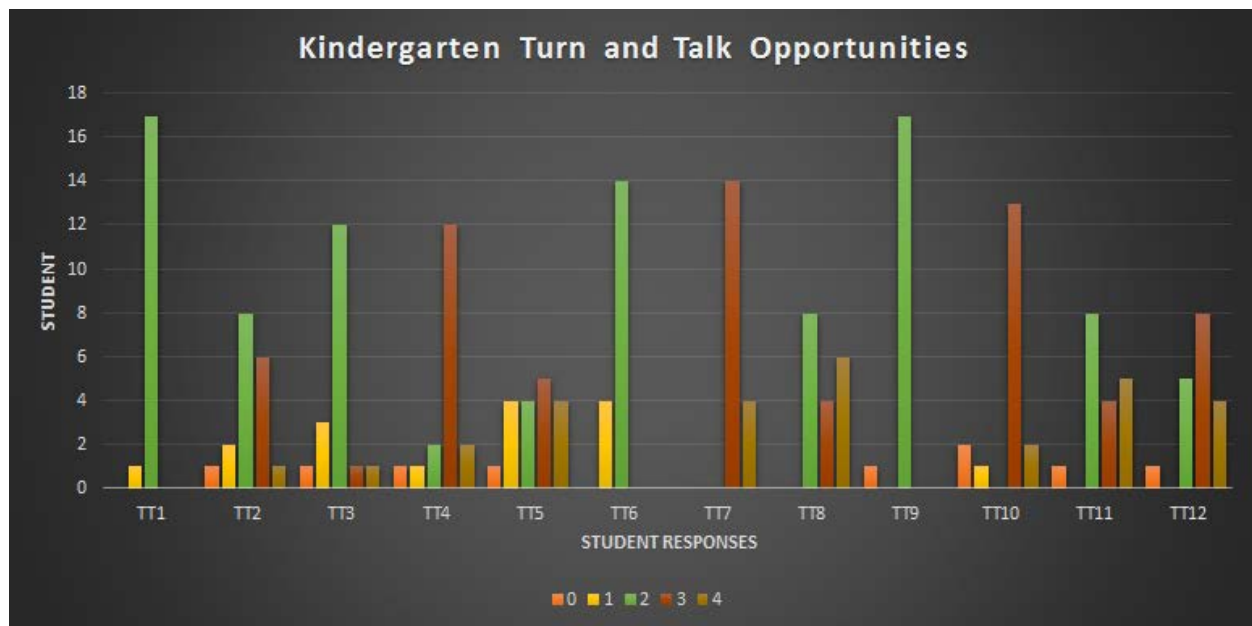


*Figure 1.* Kindergarten Vocabulary Recognition Task Pretest and Posttest. A bar graph illustrating student understanding of the pre-selected vocabulary words before and after the intervention.

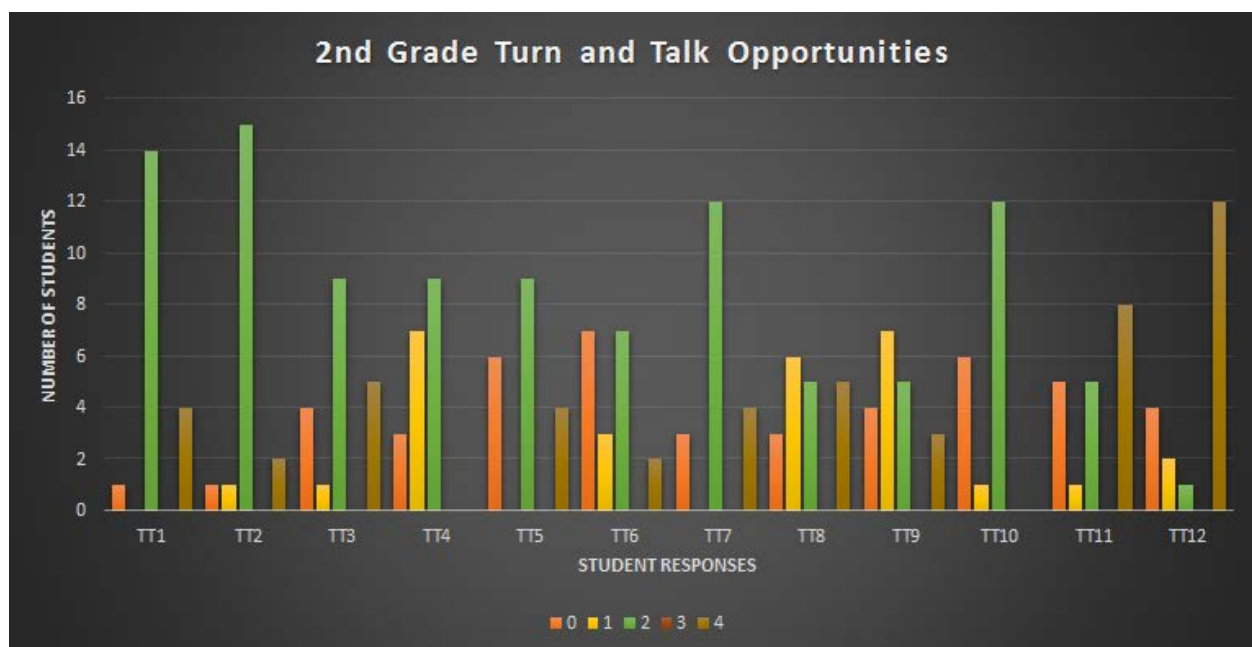


*Figure 2.* Second Grade Vocabulary Recognition Task Pretest and Posttest. A bar graph illustrating student understanding of the pre-selected vocabulary words before and after the intervention.

The second data source analyzed was the observational rubric used during student turn-and-talks. This data source was used throughout the entire unit. The purpose of this data source was to track student growth over time and to look for trends in student participation and retention of the vocabulary words taught. When coding the data, 0 was used when students were not participating. 1 was used when students attempted to participate, but weren't always on topic. 2 was used when student answers were logical, but exact vocabulary was not being used. 3 was used when the students used the exact words in their answers. 4 was used when the students gave further explanation and provided evidence. Figure 3 and Figure 4 illustrate the types of student responses used, as explained above, during the twelve turn-and-talks done throughout the unit. Figure 3 shows the Kindergarten bar graph. Figure 4 shows the second grade bar graph.



*Figure 3.* Kindergarten Turn-and-talk Observational Rubric. A bar graph illustrating student participation throughout the course of the turn-and-talks.



*Figure 4.* Second Grade Turn-and-Talk Observational Rubric. A bar graph illustrating student participation throughout the course of the turn-and-talks.

The third data source analyzed was the student journals along with the observational checklist and notes. Students were observed as they completed the pages of their journal entries. The classroom teachers observed students expressing their knowledge of the vocabulary words through written and nonlinguistic expression. The purpose of this data source was to track student participation as well as observe student understanding of vocabulary terms. The components the students demonstrated on each journal page were checked off on the observational checklist if the student demonstrated that particular skill. The components included:

1. Attempts non-linguistic representation.
2. Accurately represents non-linguistic representation.
3. Attempts written expression.
4. Accurately defines using written expression.
5. Requires adult assistance.
6. Describes representation orally.
7. Adds extra details.

Figure 5 and Figure 6 below illustrate the number of times students demonstrated each component during the eight journal entries completed throughout the unit. Figure 5 shows the Kindergarten chart. Figure 6 shows the Second Grade chart.



Student	Attempts non-linguistic	Accurately Represents non-linguistic	Attempts written expression	Accurately defines written expression	Requires adult assistance	Describes orally	Extra details	Totals per Student
a	8	7	0	2	0	6	7	30
c	8	8	1	0	0	6	1	24
d	8	4	0	0	0	6	4	22
b	8	7	0	0	0	7	1	23
e	8	8	0	0	0	6	8	30
g	8	8	8	8	0	6	8	46
f	8	8	1	0	0	6	4	27
h	8	7	2	0	1	8	7	33
i	8	6	0	0	0	6	2	22
k	8	7	0	0	0	6	8	29
j	8	8	0	0	0	6	8	30
l	8	7	0	0	0	6	7	28
m	8	6	0	0	0	6	6	26
n	8	5	0	0	0	6	8	27
p	8	6	0	0	0	6	6	26
o	7	6	0	0	0	5	6	24
q	8	8	0	0	0	6	1	23
Totals Per Category	135	116	12	10	1	104	92	470

Figure 5. Kindergarten Journal Observational Checklist. A chart illustrating the number of times students demonstrated each component on the checklist.

Student	Attempts non-linguistic	Accurately Represents non-linguistic	Attempts written expression	Accurately defines written expression	Requires adult assistance	Describes orally	Extra details	Totals per student
a	8	7	8	8	0	0	4	35
d	8	6	8	8	1	0	3	34
b	8	7	8	8	1	0	0	32
c	7	7	8	8	8	0	3	41
e	8	7	8	8	0	0	3	34
f	8	8	8	8	0	0	3	35
h	8	8	8	8	0	0	4	36
g	7	7	7	7	8	0	0	36
i	7	7	7	7	0	0	0	28
l	8	6	8	8	0	0	2	32
j	8	8	8	8	0	0	3	35
k	8	3	8	8	2	0	0	29
m	8	8	8	8	0	1	4	37
o	8	7	8	8	0	0	0	31
n	8	6	8	8	0	0	1	31
p	7	6	8	8	0	0	0	29
q	7	2	8	8	3	7	0	35
s	8	7	8	8	0	0	2	33
r	8	7	8	8	0	0	1	32
Totals per Category	147	124	150	150	23	8	33	635

Figure 6. Second Grade Journal Observational Checklist. A chart illustrating the number of times students demonstrated each component on the checklist.

The final data analyzed was the teacher evaluation survey and teacher reflection journals. The teacher evaluation survey was completed by both of us once at the beginning of the study, and once at the end. The teacher reflection journals were completed weekly by each of us. On the teacher evaluation survey, both of us rated ourselves *somewhat familiar* with the content at the beginning. As we taught the unit, we became more familiar with teaching close reading passages and felt that we knew the content much better at the end of the unit. Those feelings were reflected in our individual responses on the Teacher Evaluation Survey at the end of the study. We both felt more comfortable in handling student misconceptions at the end of the unit.

We noted in our personal reflection journals that our weekly collaboration time aided us in discussions that cleared up any misconceptions students may have had. We found that revisiting the close reading passages and reviewing the meanings of tricky words helped improve student understanding.

One area we rated ourselves similarly both times was having high expectations for all students to learn. In our discussions and personal reflection journals, we noted that all students made some growth throughout the study.

One evident theme appeared in the analysis of the Vocabulary Recognition Task (VRT). During the pretest, over half of students had a firm background knowledge of the word *hibernate*. We were surprised to learn that over half of the students did not have accurate background knowledge of the word *autumn*.

In the VRT data, student growth was apparent between the pretest and posttest. Students were much more confident and fluent when describing the words on the posttest. Since we gave the VRT pretest at the very beginning of the school year, we wonder if the results accurately reflected student understanding. One limitation of the study could be that some students may have felt uncomfortable due to their new environment and teacher.

The turn-and-talk routine became more fluent over the course of the unit. Students expressed their understanding of the vocabulary words more clearly towards the end of the unit. We wonder if this is because students became more comfortable with turn-and-talks as they became part of the classroom routine. The students who seemed disengaged in the beginning showed an increase in participation by the end of the study. Although the answers of those students were not always accurate, their participation had still improved.

We both started out by asking each student what their partner had said after the turn-and-talk. We found this strategy to be more successful in the second grade classroom.

Kindergarteners were more successful when asked to share what they had said rather than what their partner had said.

For the student vocabulary journals, both of us had planned to have the students write the definition and create a nonlinguistic representation of each vocabulary term. However, after our first meeting, we discussed that showing both forms of representation was most suitable for second graders. After the initial meeting, Kindergarten students represented the words non-linguistically and were encouraged, but not required, to use written expression. Few chose to attempt written expression.

After meeting, we also realized that second grade did not have as much need for oral description because illustrations and written expression were clear overall. If the second grade work was unclear, oral descriptions were requested by the teacher. We noticed that there was a need for oral description from the Kindergarten students for each journal entry.

Overall, student illustrations and written descriptions became more detailed over time as the students became more comfortable with the journaling process.

Our research question was: To what degree can close reading in an early elementary classroom improve vocabulary lesson engagement and retentions? There was an increase in vocabulary retention (see Figures 1 and 2), but we are challenged to note the degree of impact influenced by close reading strategies. In our district-adopted curriculum, the vocabulary is found in text, but specific definitions and visual representations are not always present. The close reading passages were focused and provided text-based evidence to support the vocabulary. In our curriculum, the words are taught, but not revisited. The close reading unit provided

several opportunities to revisit the words through pictures, picture book lists, song ideas, differentiated printable books, and student journals. We found that students were more engaged in the activities in the close reading unit than in the past. The students used the vocabulary in their conversations during other parts of the day as well.

Students were also engaged throughout the close reading unit (see Figures 3, 4, 5, and 6). Not all of the students were able to accurately describe the meaning of all of the words on the VRT posttest, however 100% of the students showed growth in their knowledge of the vocabulary words. As a result of the data analysis, it can be observed that the use of close reading passages in early elementary classrooms can positively impact student engagement and retention.

### **Action Plan**

Our research showed a positive effect on student knowledge of the pre-selected vocabulary words taught throughout the close reading unit. The focus of the study was to check for student participation during vocabulary learning opportunities as well as retention of the pre-selected vocabulary terms. Students retained the vocabulary taught and actively participated in the activities during the close reading unit.

All students showed some growth from the beginning to the end of the unit. It was observed that students became more comfortable and descriptive as they shared their knowledge of the vocabulary verbally, in their illustrations, and through written expression. They also became more comfortable with supporting their answers and applying the knowledge in other curricular areas. Not only did students become more comfortable in the vocabulary knowledge, but also in daily classroom routines like journaling and turn-and-talks.

Some students displayed leadership skills by involving the students who seemed less engaged. They asked the less engaged students to share their ideas and knowledge during the turn-and-talks. Students were eager to share their own ideas that pertained to the vocabulary while journaling, participating in turn-and-talks, and in learning centers.

Most students expressed positive feelings about learning the new vocabulary words. We noticed that students especially enjoyed representing their knowledge and understanding through non-linguistic representations in their vocabulary journals. We wonder if students felt safer representing their knowledge non-linguistically. It seems that students felt that there were many examples of the vocabulary words that could be represented non-linguistically, but felt their written definitions could be considered wrong. We noticed students asked many times if their written definitions were 'right'. When it came time for them to draw an example of the vocabulary word, far fewer of those questions were asked by students. Their eagerness to share their drawings was much more apparent than when sharing their written work.

We would like to continue to implement close reading passages in our future vocabulary instruction. Being thoughtful during the planning of our unit was crucial to its success. For future units, we would like to tie several parts of the day around pre-selected vocabulary. Those things include other curricular areas as well as centers, read-alouds, games, songs, and videos. We plan to continue implementing the VRT, student journal observation checklists and the observational rubric for each unit. We will change the observational rubric and the student journal checklist to align with the Common Core State Standards. As our focus changes for each new unit, the standards will change as well.

In order to keep students engaged throughout the year, we would like to find other methods for students to represent vocabulary. Some examples include art projects, experiments, and hands-on projects.

During the close reading unit, we were thoughtful and consistent about revisiting and reviewing the information and words due to the layout of the close reading unit. We will continue to use that model when revisiting and reviewing unit information in the future. When re-teaching, we would like to have a more concrete plan for students who need more exposure to the words. One way we could meet that need is to reteach during our small group time.

In our research, we found that pre-selected word lists are necessary. When words are pre-selected, it allows teachers to focus their instruction to provide students with the most applicable vocabulary terms. More time can be dedicated to intense instruction to the more unfamiliar words rather than to known words (Stahl et al., 2010).

We found it to be extremely beneficial to have our words chosen beforehand in order to track student progress and to have a focus for the unit. Since starting the study, we have noticed that we look at the books we choose for our students differently. Instead of just reading a book to our students, we think about what vocabulary could be pulled out and how it could be applied to our lessons. Prior to the start of our research, we were involved in various conversations with colleagues that pertained to vocabulary. One frequent question that came up was: *What makes pre-selected vocabulary words valid?* It would be beneficial to do further research about how to choose valid vocabulary along with differentiating the word lists to meet the individual needs of our students.

The results from this research show an overall positive influence on vocabulary retention, student participation, and student feelings about learning new vocabulary. It is our belief that

student vocabulary retention can be supported and improved through close reading passages along with incorporating the pre-selected words into other curricular areas. We also believe student participation can be improved through multiple exposures including songs, poems, centers, and games. With close reading passages as the focal point, all of these aspects can encompass them to improve student retention and participation during vocabulary instruction.



## Appendix A

## Self Evaluation

### \* Required

How would you rate your knowledge of content? \*

- ☐ Expert in content knowledge
- ☐ Knows content well
- ☐ Somewhat familiar with content
- ☐ Little familiarly with content knowledge

How well do you anticipate student misconceptions? \*

- ☐ I anticipate misconceptions well and have many ideas of what I can do to help them.
- ☐ I anticipate misconceptions and I have a plan to address them.
- ☐ I have an idea or two about what to do with student misconceptions.
- ☐ I really don't account for any student misconceptions.

How engaging do you feel your lessons are? \*

I really don't think my lessons are very engaging.	I believe my lessons to be the most engaging lessons I've seen.
How effective are your classroom materials? *	
My classroom materials are old, outdated, and irrelevant to what the students are learning.	My classroom materials are high in quality; promoting learning very relevant to what students should be learning.

What are your expectations for your students? \*

- I have high expectations that all students can learn, and don't settle for less
- I show my students that I believe in them and won't give up on them, and connect with most
- I tell my students that what we do matters and it's important.
- I see that some will get it, others won't, and that's just the way it is.

How well do students make connections in your class? \*

---

Students really don't make connections to their lives outside of material.

Students almost always make connections from the material to their lives.

---

How would you rank your lessons on clarity? \*

- I present material clearly with well fitting examples.
- I use clear examples that fit.
- Sometimes, my lessons tend to be a little unclear.
- When I teach, I get a lot of confused looks on the faces of my students.

How engaged are your students? \*

- Almost all my students are involved in focused activities, where they are actively problem solving and learning.
- My students think about, discuss, and use the skills they are working on.
- I try, but some of my students choose not to be engaged.
- Most of the time, students really don't care for my lectures and worksheets.

How well do your students know what's expected of them? \*

- I consistently post exemplars, with rubrics, so students know what qualifies at each level of understanding.
- I have posted rubrics and exemplars.
- I tell my students what their finished work should look like.
- I expect my students to know what they should have to do to get good grades.

How well do you check for understanding? \*

---

I'm not really open  
to new ideas, I've  
got this pretty well  
figured out.

I'm always reaching out for  
new ideas, discussing with  
my colleagues, and  
looking for what the latest  
research says.

---

How do you feel you reflect on your instruction? \*

- I work with my colleagues to discuss what went well, what didn't work, and how it will impact my teaching.
- I reflect on my lessons and continuously try to improve them on my own.
- At the end of a unit, I will think about what could have been better.
- I don't really see a need to look into the past, as long as I can keep up with my pacing guide.

How open are you to professional growth? \*

---

I'm not really open  
to new ideas. I've  
got this pretty well  
figured out.

I'm always reaching out for  
new ideas, discussing with  
my colleagues, and  
looking for what the latest  
research says.

---

What are some ways that you self-assess? \*

Describe how you have collaborated with your learning team partner. \*

## Appendix B

**Vocabulary Recognition Task (VRT)****Unit/Theme:** *Let's Take a Close Look at Fall* by Lyndsey Kuster**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_**Individual students and the classroom teacher will do this together.**

Directions: When I say a word, answer "yes" if you've heard it or know what it means and "no" if you do not. If you answer "yes", I will ask you to tell me what it means.

Vocabulary Word List	Pretest		Posttest	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>autumn</b>				
If yes, explain				
<b>season</b>				
If yes, explain				
<b>tilt</b>				
If yes, explain				
<b>migrate</b>				
If yes, explain				
<b>hibernate</b>				
If yes, explain				
<b>rodent</b>				
If yes, explain				
<b>harvest</b>				
If yes, explain				
<b>Tackle</b>				
If yes, explain				

## Close Reading Turn-and-Talk Observational Rubric

0: The student is not participating.

2: Student answers are logical, but exact vocabulary is not being used.

3: The student is using the exact vocabulary words in their answers.

4: The student is giving further explanation and providing evidence.

[illegible]

## Appendix D

**Vocabulary Journal Observation Checklist and Notes**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Word																			
Observation																			
Attempts to represent word meaning in nonlinguistic ways (pictures, graphic organizer, etc).																			
Accurately represents word meaning in nonlinguistic ways (pictures, graphic organizer, etc).																			
Attempts to define vocabulary word meaning through written expression.																			
Accurately defines vocabulary word meaning through written expression.																			
Requires assistance from adults.																			
Accurately describes the journal page information orally.																			
Accurately adds extra details to journal page.																			

Observational Notes:

## References

- Apthorp, H.S. (2006). Effects of a supplemental vocabulary program in third-grade reading/language arts. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 100(2), 67-79, 128.
- Retrieved from  
<http://search.proquest.com.pearl.stkate.edu/education/docview/204200959/fulltextPDF/7604BBB7FC674DF2PQ/2?accountid=26879>
- Berne, J. & Blachowicz, C. (2009). What reading teachers say about vocabulary instruction: Voices from the classroom. *The Reading Teacher*, 62(4), 314-323. Retrieved from  
<http://search.proquest.com.pearl.stkate.edu/education/docview/203282378/ADAF8F55D06E4DA8PQ/1?accountid=26879>
- Boote, C. (2006). Vocabulary: Reasons to teach it, an effective teaching method, and words worth teaching. *New England Reading Association Journal*, 42(2), 24-28, 62. Retrieved from  
<http://search.proquest.com.pearl.stkate.edu/education/docview/206038946/3A534321D9BC4117PQ/1?accountid=26879>
- Christ, T. & Wang X. C. (2010). Bridging the vocabulary gap: What the research tells us about vocabulary instruction in early childhood. *YC Young Children*, 65(4). Retrieved from  
<http://search.proquest.com.pearl.stkate.edu/docview/873822737/fulltextPDF/2B623BCB BFFF4B64PQ/58?accountid=26879>

Corrigan, R. (2011). Effects of pre-service teachers' receptive vocabulary knowledge on their interactive read-alouds with elementary school students. *Reading and Writing*, 24(7), 749-771. Retrieved from

<http://search.proquest.com.pearl.stkate.edu/education/docview/878463941/6A30FA9A837845C5PQ/1?accountid=26879>

Gill, S. R. (2008). The comprehension matrix: A tool for designing comprehension instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 62(2), 106-113. Retrieved from

<http://search.proquest.com.pearl.stkate.edu/education/docview/203281871/fulltextPDF/91790C8F84FC455EPQ/117?accountid=26879>

Hasty, M. M. & Schrodtt, K. E. (2015). Using writing to support close reading: Engagement and evidence from the text. *Voices From the Middle*, 22(2). Retrieved from

<http://search.proquest.com.pearl.stkate.edu/education/docview/1674172374/fulltextPDF/D7EDDB454DF14DC1PQ/4?accountid=26879>

Iman, J. A. (2009). The influence of direct vocabulary instruction in reading proficiency in kindergarten and first grade. University of La Verne, Proquest, UMI Dissertations Publishing. Retrieved from

<http://search.proquest.com.pearl.stkate.edu/education/docview/305085738/2D1746DC904B40C9PQ/11?accountid=26879>



- Jalongo, M. & Sobolak, M. (2011). Supporting young children's vocabulary growth: The challenges, the benefits, and evidence-based strategies. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 38 (6). 421-429. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.pearl.stkate.edu/education/docview/853332664/EA1AA9D4CFCC4056PQ/1?accountid=26879>
- Kindle, K. J. (2010). Vocabulary development during read-alouds: Examining the instructional sequence. *Literacy Teaching and Learning*, 14(1&2). Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.pearl.stkate.edu/docview/518035185/fulltextPDF/2B623BCBBFFF4B64PQ/99?accountid=26879>
- Kuster, L. (2015). Let's take a close look at fall. Retrieved from <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/>
- Marzano, R. J. (2004). Building background knowledge for academic achievement: Research on what works in schools. Alexandria, VA.
- Marzano, R. J. (2012). A comprehensive approach to vocabulary instruction. *Voices From the Middle*, 20(1), 31-35. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.pearl.stkate.edu/education/docview/1039696338/fulltextPDF/38F2A08D2D9E4A7FPQ/1?accountid=26879>

Maynard, K. L., Pullen, P. C., Coyne, M. D. (2010). Teaching vocabulary to first-grade students through repeated shared storybook reading: A comparison of rich and basic instruction to incidental exposure. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, 49(3). Retrieved from

<http://search.proquest.com.pearl.stkate.edu/education/docview/734874339/fulltextPDF/99E65D249C7549F5PQ/17?accountid=26879>

McIntyre, E. (2007). Story discussion in the primary grades: Balancing authenticity and explicit teaching. *International Reading Association*, 60(7), 610-620. Retrieved from

<http://search.proquest.com.pearl.stkate.edu/education/docview/203287221/fulltextPDF/716F75C9EDB4183PQ/15?accountid=26879>

O'Leary, P. M., Cockburn, M. K., Powell, D. R., & Diamond, K. E. (2010). Head start teachers' views of phonological awareness and vocabulary knowledge instruction. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 38, 187-195. Retrieved from

<http://search.proquest.com.pearl.stkate.edu/education/docview/756106116/fulltextPDF/C8DCAFA565B743ECPQ/6?accountid=26879>

Spencer, E. J., Goldstein, H., Sherman, A., Noe, S., Tabbah, R., Ziolkowski, R., & Schneider, N. (2012). Effects of an automated vocabulary and comprehension intervention: An early efficacy study. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 34(4), 195-221. Retrieved from

<http://search.proquest.com.pearl.stkate.edu/education/docview/1353300298/fulltextPDF/C8DCAFA565B743ECPQ/21?accountid=26879>

Stahl, K. A. & Bravo, M. A. (2010). Contemporary classroom vocabulary assessment for content areas. *The Reading Teacher*, 63(7). Retrieved from

<http://search.proquest.com.pearl.stkate.edu/docview/203282898/fulltextPDF/CC2022B7D460429FPQ/122?accountid=26879>

St. John, P. & Vance, M. (2014). Evaluation of a principled approach to vocabulary learning in mainstream classes. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy*, 30(3), 255-271. Retrieved from

<http://search.proquest.com.pearl.stkate.edu/education/docview/1564006478/fulltextPDF/99E65D249C7549F5PQ/25?accountid=26879>